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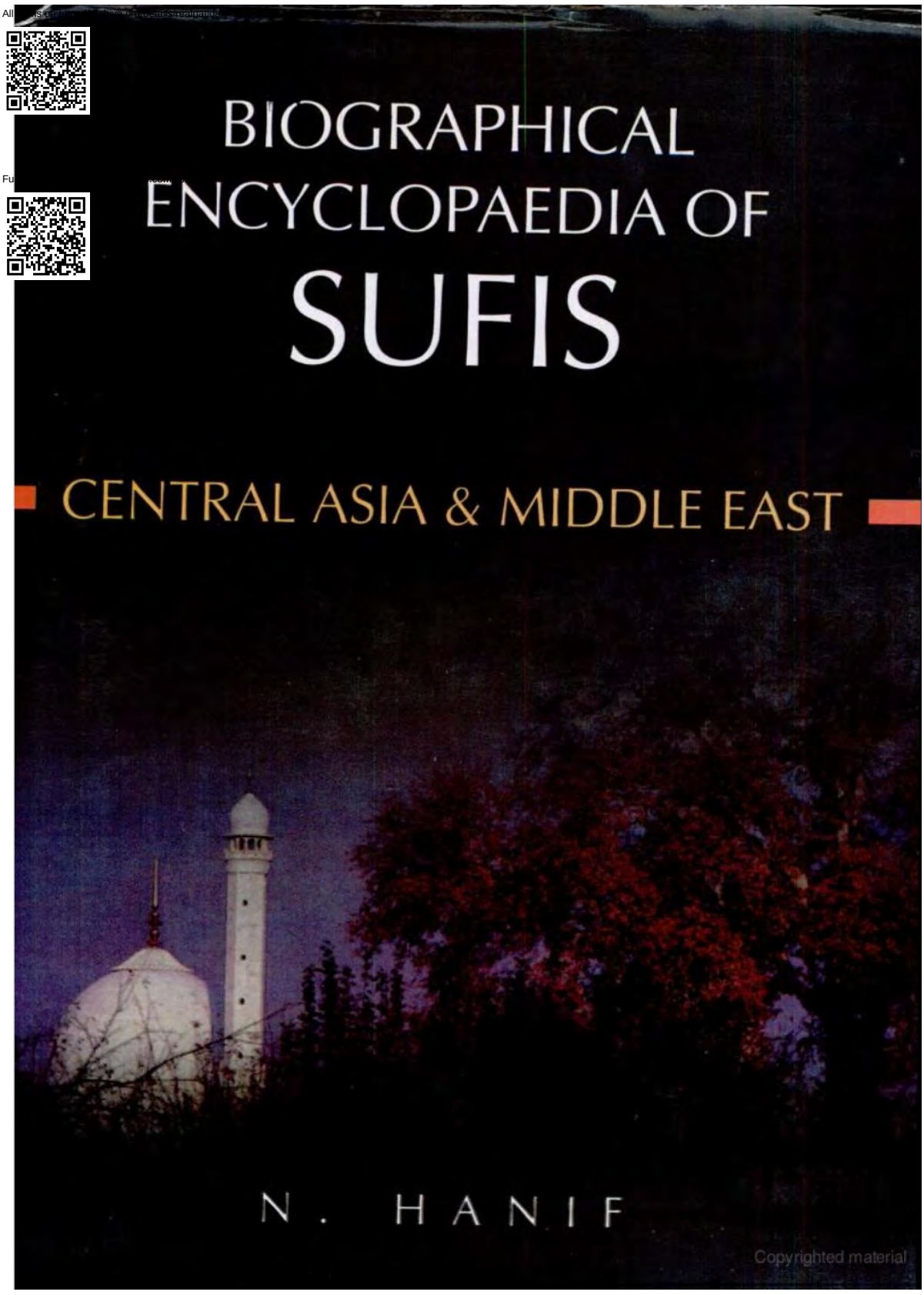

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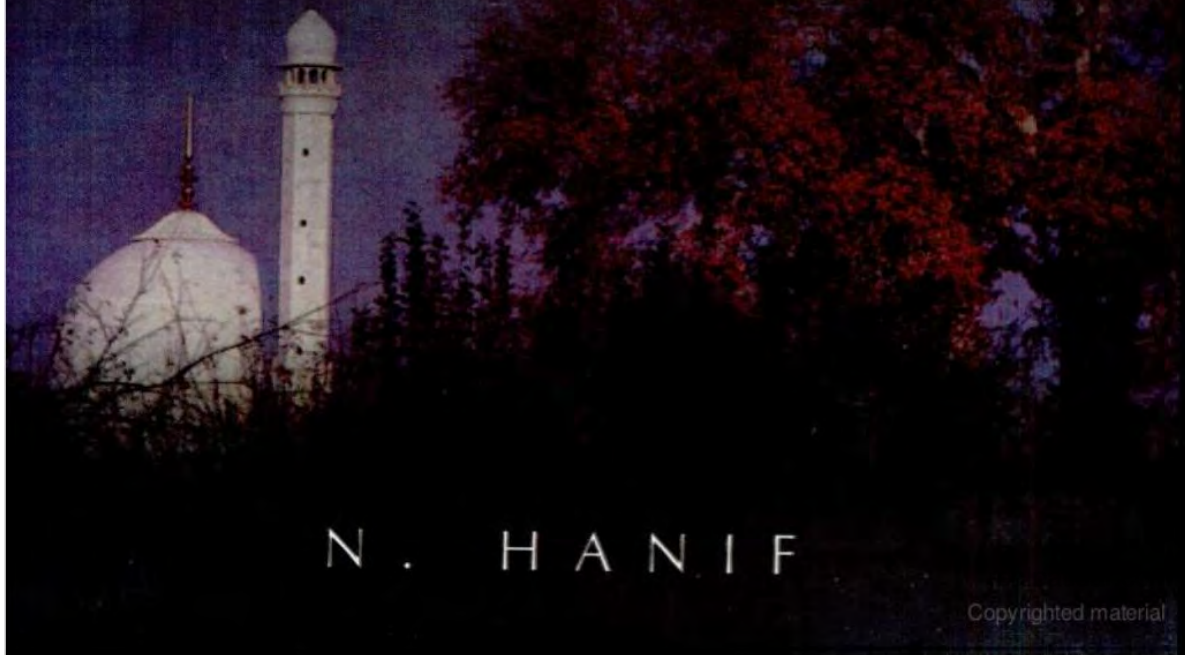

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Pir Shams

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Shams, Pir (1165–1277)

Pir Shams was born in Ghazna in 1165 C.E. and buried in Ucch in 1277 C.E. Now, there are several dates mentioned in the *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams that advance his life by at least half a century. The realiest date appears in the fifth verse of *Surbhanaji Vel*, which states that Pir Shams visited his disciple Surbhan in s. 1175, that is, 1118 C.E. The next date occurs in the *ginan* sequence called *Jodilo* (see translation in the Anthology). Verse 25 of Ginan number 77 (henceforth, the *ginan* number and verse will be cited as follows: 77:25) states:

> In the year Samvat 1178 on the last day of the month of Kartik, The Guru established himself; the day was Tuesday. 77:25.

Zawahir Noorally interprets this verse to mean that the Pir established his centre of preaching on this date (1111 C.E.). The verse occurs in the context of a story about the Pir's conversion of a Hindu town and the date given marks the time when the king and his subjects were initiated into Satpanth. The next two dates are cited in *Candrabhanaji Vel;* it notes that Pir Shams came to Cinab in s. 1200/1143 C.E. and that Candrabhan converted to Satpanth on s. 1207/1150 C.E.

Now what is to be made of these dates, one of which includes the day and month as well? Why was it so important to record the date of these stated conversions and meetings with the disciples? If these dates are to be trusted, how do we account for the dates preseved in the *shajara* which place Pir Shams a century later? It is rather difficult to answer these questions. There is no obvious reason to suspect that these dates were concocted. Could the dates be markers of events associated with *da'is* who preceded Pir Shams? Either Pir Shams did, in fact, preach in India during the first half of the twelfth century he did not, in which case, one can only speculate that perhaps he had a predecessor whose activities have been attributed to him. The connection of these dates with his two disciples only serves to complicate matters further.

If the dates are trust-worthy it would mean that the main activity of Pir Shams in Sind immediately preceded the Ghurid invasions of the Isma'ili areas in Multan which began in 1160 C.E. and which ended with Muhammad Ghori's capture and slaughter of the Isma'ilis in Multan's capital, Ucch, in 1175C.E. Whether Pir Shams was born in Ghazna in 1165 C.E. and came to India in 1202 C.E., or whether he was already in India by 1118 C.E., both the *shajara* and the *ginan* dates imply that his activities in Sind preceded the fall of Alamut. In other words, in all likelihood his activities and preaching took place at a time when the Nizari Isma'ili *da'wah* was still a vigorours political operation. If this were the case, has some memory of this context been preserved in the *ginans* attributed to him? Is there any evidence in the *ginans* that indicate directly or implicitly that Pir Shams was engaged in political activity?

Place Names: To answer this question, let us examine a few *ginans* in the Anothology attributed to Pir Shams that refer to places in the general area associated with Isma'ili presence in Sind, namely, Multan, Cinab, Ghazni and Ucch. This discussion and analysis will limit itself to those details that may be of relevance to the life and work of Pir Shams or of his time and will focus on accounts centred in and around Multan. Nonetheless, it will sufficiently demonstrate that there is a great deal of rich material embedded in the *ginans* that may be of some historical value.

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Process adopted to preach Satpanth

Twelve *ginans* in Anthology make reference to Multan and a town called Cinab, which most likely refers to Multan itself (since Multan is 'the city on the Cinab river'). What is most striking about this group of *ginans* is their battle and fort imagery and the secret alliance that exists between a Queen Surjadevi and Pir Shams through his two disciples. According to these *ginan* narratives, Pir Shams came from the region of Alamut (Daylaman) to Multan where he settled.

From Multan, the Pir proceeded to Ghazni taking along with him two youths, Candrabhan and Surbhan. These two disciples accompanied Pir Shams wherever he went and they feature regularly in his various adventures. In fact, upon closer inspection of the various stories, they function typically as mediating or messenger figures between the Pir and his opponents or allies.

The constant presence of these two diminutive figures, which, from a literary standpoint, act as a foil to heighten the stature of the Pir, signals their importance in the narratives. Candrabhan and Surbhan were the Pir's two arms, so to speak, inasmuch as he instructed them to communicate messages got his devotees or to teach new recruits the beliefs and practices of Satpanth. But, lest their significance be missed, several *ginans* simply declare the 'fact' that they were his true disciples (*dasa*) and devotees (*bhakta*). For instance,

> "Two brothers Candrabhan and Surbhan
> were the disciples (*cela*) of Pir Shams
> Of a common ancestor, they were devotees (*bhagat*)
> Of the present age (*kalyug*)."

The authorisation of their status is significant particularly since it is clear that they actually function in several narratives as the Pir's surrogates. An interesting *ginan* which recounts a dialogue between Pir Shams (in the form of a parrot) and one of his female devotees (a queen called Surjadevi) confirms this special connection between the Pir and his two disciples. She asks him to tell her about the appearance and approach of the 'two travellers' whom he is sending to her. Pir Shams replies:

> "O Queen, both of them live with me;
> They will come reciting the *ginas* of the Guru;
> As for their caste, they are servants/devotees (*dasa*)."

Surjadevi then says she will bring together her circle of eight to this meeting and beseeches him to teach all. The Pir then speaks of a place (of happiness) that existed before there was either earth or sky:

> "Queen Surja asked, "What is the key to that place, O Swami
> Reveal to us some sign, some name by which to realize it."

This theme of secret signs and keys is pervasive throughout and creates the impression that a special code existed which the characters used to communicate messages. It is possible, for instance, that the various unknown characters named in the *ginans*, as well as the repeated reference to mythical characters, represented some kind of secret code language. In any case, the Pir assures her that his disciples will come and show her the path. It is worth stressing that Pir Shams seems to be in secret communication with the queen and reveals to her the signs by which she will recognise his messengers, who, in turn, will give her the 'key' to release or freedom. Further, the queen appears to have collected together a small group of followers who await further instruction from the Pir.

Satpanth Dasavatar Dashavatar story, which is corrupt form of Hindu Dasavatar

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Surja Rani - Part of Dasavatar

We surmise from references to a large following at Cinab and its chaste woman, Surjadevi, that, according to Satpanth tradition, the Shah had been victorious over the demon-king. We may never know whether this actually happened, but the account may still hold political significance. For, it is plausible that the narrative marked an event in the emergent period of the *da'wah* in India when a local Hindu kingdom was wrested away by the Sumrahs who received the help of reserve forces from Alamut.

An interesting question is why did the queen have such strong Isma'ili sympathies in contrast to her husband—king? Quite possibly, this may have been an instance of the practice of inter-marriage to gain political alliances. An arranged marriage of an Isma'ili woman (such as the daughter of a Sumrah chief) with a Hindu king would have been one way to create social and political connections and to rally support around the Isma'ili cause without undue strife. It would seem, then, that this method did not always work. At any rate, the above narrative is an important testimony, even if couched in the form of a heroic religious tale, that when the *da'wah* did not succeed by peaceful means in striking up alliances to advance its cause, on occasion, it may have had to engage in warfare with local Hindu kingdoms.

While it is not possible to present and analyse all the details in the *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams, what becomes quickly apparent is the abundance of allusions, nuances, metaphors and narrative episodes that communicate the following themes which suggest the context in which the *dawah* operated and the Isma'ili message was spread: secret missions; conspiracy and alliances; promises of victory and reward; relief from oppression; help as military enforcements; tithe to support the cause; plotted rebellion; the Shah as refuge and saviour; tests of faith; loyalty and sacrifice as pre-requisites to salvation. To illustrate, several *ginans* eulogise the need for and examples of self-sacrifice or martyrdom:

> "Tear out the roots of evil, O Brother; and the soul will stay pure!
> Sever your head and submit it willingly to the Guru;
> Then, the Gurunara will become your helper.
> For the sake of my soul, I have relinquished all;
> I have come to take refuge in you.
> Hear, O Brother! Listen, O Friend!
> What did he do for the sake of his soul?
> O Friend, he cut off his head and sacrificed it,
> Yes, he cut his head off."

These verses may indeed reflect a readiness to sacrifice oneself to the Guru or *imam's* cause. They are balanced by frequent assurances that one's true reward lies in the attainment of eternal life in the hereafter. The kingdom of the Saheb is *savaga* (heaven), *amarapuri* (City of Immortality) and *vaikuntha* (abode of Visnu).

> "If you follow our orders, you will attain the City of Immortality;
> There you will gain endless happiness and protection of the Lord.
> Those who followed the Guru's words attained Heaven (*vaikuntha*);
> Recognise our devotees, for they are our servants."

But equally, there are many assurances that salvation is not only heavenly but earthly, inasmuch as military help is anticipated from the Shah who lives in the West and who promises a just and liberated society. In addition to the verses noted above with reference to Surjadevi, the following oath is note-worthy:

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against her Hindu husband—king. In Henry Raverty's translation of the *Tabakat-i Nasiri*, he states in his notes that, after Multan was captured from the Isma'ilis in 1175 C.E., the Ghurid Sultan Mu'izz al-Din went on to seize Ucch. He then gives Ferishta's account of the battle as follows:

As he knew that to overcome that Rajah in battle and capture the fort would be arduous, he dispatched a person to the wife of the Rajah, who was despotic over her husband and cajoled her and promised, saying:

> "If, by your endeavours, this city shall be taken, having contracted marriage with you, I will make you Malikah-i-Jahan..."

Raverty notes that the Rajah was chief of the Bhati tribe and that according to Ferishta, the ploy worked and the Sultan did marry the queen's daughter. Both queen and daughter were made Muslims and sent to Ghazni for further instruction, where they died unhappy, 'from not having obtained the enjoyment of the Sultan's society.' It is impossible to reach any conclusions with this information, save that Muslim rulers used this tactic of the promise of marriage with some success.

The question has been raised earlier whether the *pirs* dispatched from Persia themselves composed the *ginans* or whether they had their local disciples compose them. The accounts of the disciples of Pir Shams seems to suggest that they may have played a key role in shaping the *ginan* tradition. In several *ginans*, the Pir instructs his disciples to teach his devotees and new followers the practices and doctrines of Satpanth. Other *ginans* bear testimony that they did:

> "[Surbhan] related to her the Guru's wisdom (*ginan*)
> And they meditated on its teaching (*veda*)...
> "We will impart to you the principles of religion (*dharma*),
> But lady, you are the mistress in a demon's house." 10:4
> Hari came to the province of Daylaman
> and then settled in Multan;
> Vimras, Hari's devotee recited *ginans* in honour of the Guru.14:3
> "Come to Multan both of you, O King and Queen!
> I will send you two messengers after
> six months have passed." 28 68
> They all bowed at the Guru's feet and confessed all to him:
> "Show us, O Swami, all about the fellowship of truth." 68:10
> "Our devotees are examples of wisdom (*ginan*)—
> they will teach you;
> They are Vimras and Surbhan; they will give support of the truth."

It is possible that the actual names of the disciples, Candrabhan and Surbhan, are pseudonyms which convey this idea of composition. Candrabhan may literally refer to 'one who knows *chand* or meter.' and Surbhan to 'one who knows *sur* or melody.' Certainly, this would help to explain the teachers' familiarity with the Hindu material. At the very least, the composers of te *ginans* may have been well-acquainted with Hindu ideas and mores. It is also conceivable that the early *pirs* used their disciples not only as messengers, teachers and composers, but also as translators of their own messages.

There are several accounts in the *ginans* that relate the conversion of Hindu chiefs and kings, followed by their subjects. For instance, a narrative set in a town called Bhotnagar describes episodes leading to the allegiance of a Gaekwad king called Devsingh. Another

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narrative describes rulers who are devout followers of the Pir, for instance, Raja Manasudha and Rani Radiya in a town called Prem Patan.

The preponderance of references to people of power and high social status, that is, to rulers and kings, in the *ginans* is striking. Nanji thinks that the conversion of rulers should be interpreted at a symbolic level and not as a testimony of historical actuality because in contrast to the earlier Fatimid *da'wah* in Sind, the Nizari *da'wah* in the Indo-Pak sub-continent was, subsequent to the fall of Alamut, quietist and non-political in orientation. This view is interated by Christopher Shackle and Zawahir Moir who go on to firmly assert a position that this investigation counters namely that after the destruction of Multan by Mahmud Ghaznawi:

> "While it seems probable that the practice of *taqiyya* would have allowed an Ismaili tradition to continue locally, *this never resulted in any subsequent attempt to regain local polical power on the Fatimid pattern* (emphasis mine)."

On the contrary, if the Nizari *da'wah* had begun its activities in the Indo-Pak region well *before* Alamut's fall, it may still have been sufficiently active in Sind politically to establish a vassal state or to reclaim the stake of its predecessors, the Fatimids. The prepohderance of relations with rulers and their conversions in the *ginans* suggests that there is more to these narratives than legitimation and the pious edification of converts. Given the historical context, it is possible to recognise in these stories covert messages of political alliance. If the Nizari *da'wah* had seriously entertained political ambitions right until the moment of Alamut's destruction, it is reasonable to expect that it would have continued to channel its energies into winning the favour and support of local chieftains wherever it could.

Assuming that the early beginnings of Satpanth were both political and religious but that after Alamut's devastation, Satpanth was forced underground and had to adopt a more inward, spiritual and quiescent expression, do the *ginans* reflect this change and, if so, how? I have argued thus far that there are a number of *ginan* narratives, particularly the ones associated with Multan, that indicate a situation of tension, intrigue and promise of imminent help. These poems preponderantly focus upon actual battle scenes and on the victory expected through the impending arrival of the Shah, who is represented as the saviour—*avatar*. It is clearly this promise of success that is at the bottom of many alliances made with the Pir, who gives repeated assurances and pledges of military aid. The practical dimensions of these promises are, however, very easy to miss since they are couched in the language of religious salvation.

It is, in fact, possible to detect a slight difference between those *ginans* in which liberation is clearly associated with victory over an enemy and those in which it refers primarily to religious salvation. That is, there are *ginans* in the Anthology of Shams, specifically, the series of songs called the *Garbis* which, unlike te *ginans* connected with Surjadevi, promise salvation almost exclusively in terms of the hereafter. A different strategy is used in these *ginans* to make the case for the Shah compelling.

Whereas in the above *ginans* the appeal of the Shah rests in the military prowess by which he will vanquish oppressors and evil-doers, in the *Garbis* the case is built up in

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songs sung on such occasions were also called *garbis*.

The *Garbis* attributed to Pir Shams form a narrative about conversion. Woven into the narrative are long sections of instructions and exhortations so that only eight poems actually describe any dramatic actions or scenes. Briefly, the story of the *Garbis* is as follows. Pir Shams comes to a town called Analvad to find the villagers celebrating the festival of *norta*. This is most probably the festival of Navaratri, which literally refers to the 'nine nights' of worship and devotion to the Hindu goddess: Durga or *Mata Bhavani* (the fearsome Mother.) The scene is a veritable spectacle of festivities, with five-hundred Hindus dancing and thirty-six *pandits* chanting the Vedas.

The Pir watches them worship and adore their idols and is angered by the image worship. As a strategy to stop it, he decides to join in the dance and to sing his own *garbis*. Night after night, he returns to sing and dance, all the while admonishing the Hindu worshippers for paying homage to idols made of mere stone. Instead, he preaches to them the principles of *sat panth*, the True Path. Finally, one night a *brahmin* called Sankar leaves the *garbi* dance in disgust. (The narrator has a gloss that poor Sankar lacked *punya* or merit.) The rest of the crowd, however, remains to listen to the Pir because (again the narrator explains) it has realized the secret, namely, that he, Pir Shams, is a saint (*deva*—lit., god). The first ones to realize this truth are the remaining thirty-five *brahmin pandits*. Their hearts transformed, they abandon their religious scriptures (*puran*) and there is great rejoicing as they beat their seven drums and cry *jay*! *jay*! (Victory! Victory!). The villagers, meanwhile, are stunned by this spectacle.

The Pir (referred to as Guru) continues singing his songs of wisdom (*ginans*) and, soon enough, word spreads and the princes of the land arrive and join in the dancing. News of the spectacle reaches the king who, with his ministers, comes to hear the much talked-about Guru. Impressed with the latter's miraculous conversion of the *brahmins*, the king, too, prostrates himself at the Guru's feet. Again, the villagers are astonished. In this manner, then, the priests, king, queen, town-folk and various religious ascetics such as the *jogis*, *sannyasis* and *viragis* all prostrate themselves at the Guru's feet and abandon their gods (*deva*) and scriptures (*Sastra*).

A small mountain of strings piles up as the *brahmins* break off and discard their sacred threads. The dancers throw away their *garbi* lamps, which they have worshipped all these nights, into the sea. The Guru then makes them drink holy water (*paval*) to purify them of past sins. He appoints a leader (*mukhi*) to oversee this new religious community, which is blessed by the sudden vision (*didar*) of the Lord (*nar*) Qasim Shah. Their hearts are filled with divine light (*nur*) and the story ends with a scene of general rejoicing with the Pir's songs of wisdom (*ginan*) and circle of dance (*garbi*).

Now, what is of interest here is the method by which Satpanth is made attractive in the *Garbis* to this society of Hindus. It is important to note that the *Garbis* construct a religious frame-work for conversion and that the poems focus upon the superiority of the religion that the Pir is offering to them. Several elements ultimately combine into defining this True Path, or *Sat Panth*, as the Pir calls it in the *Garbis*. The configuration of religious elements in the context before the Pir's arrival undergoes a major change by the end of the narrative, but without dramatic upheaval.

Role of Garbis in conversion

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In the first instance, there is the festival of Navaratri, the nine days before the celebration of Dasera, when the Goddess Durga, here referred to *as Mata Bhavani* (fearsome Mother), is worshipped. Hindus, gathered in a temple compound in a town called Analvad, are worshipping *sakti*, the female principle of the Lord Siva. There is, besides the *garbi* lamp pot, a stone and clay image of the goddess in the temple that they adorn and worship. Their ritual is characteried by revelry and dancing (*garbi*) to the accompaniment of song (*git*), as well as the recitation of heroic tales (*katha*) by the *brahmin pandits* from their sacred scriptures (*sastras*).

Interestingly, all these elements that initially stand out in the narrative are the very ones that are finally rejected (see illustration). As the Pir recites his *garbi* songs, he invokes by way of association other elements intrinsic to the Hindu milieu, including Hindu theories of salvation and Hindu mythology. In other words, the Hindu worldview remains present in the new path that the converts adopt. Common religious motifs such as the ideal of salvation or liberation from rebirth (*mukti*); the attainment of bliss in heaven (*vaikuntha*); the destruction of the effects of past deeds (*karma*); the accumulation of merit (*punya*); the saving powers of deities, saints and *avtar* figures; and the traditional veneration for sacred word and scripture (*sastra*); all these familiar notions are invoked.

But, although many aspects of the Hindu worldview are retrained, they are deliberately used as the scaffolding for a new concept of faith. Satpanth *also* rejects, reorganises and redefines these and other elements internal to the Hindu context. Thus, the Guru tells the Hindus to throw away their idols, which are mere stones, but he entices them with the hope of salvation by conjuring up the image of millions of gods and godlings such as the *yaksas* and *meghas*, the *kinnars* and *devas* who are all in heaven (*vaikuntha*) attending upon and serving the *guranar* or *satguru* who is none other than the *avatar* or Vishnu, the bow-wielder (*sarangapana*) identified as 'Ali, the first Shi'ite *imam*. Likewise, the Pir exhorts the Hindus to pay heed to the *Sar* or essence of their *sastras* whose last *Veda* is the *Qur'an*, the message of which he has conveyed in the *ginans*.

While retaining the prominence of the *Vedas* and *Puranas*, the *Garbis* reject their pertinence and pronounce them to be archaic, whereas their essence has been freshly expressed in the *ginans*. *The Qur'an* is proclaimed as the conclusive *Veda* and the *ginans* as the inspired words of the *pirs* capture the bit of the *Qur'an*'s teachings. Satpanth is, therefore, the True Path and the crowning phase of Hinduism (a claim not much different from the *Qur'anic* assertion of itself as the last Revelation and of Islam as the perfection of the religion of the *ahl al-kitab* or People of the Book).

In a process much like the *lexique technique* employed by Kabir in his popular phase, *rama rahim krsna karim*, the *Garbis* succeed in creating an emotional and cognitive bridge by the juxtaposition and association of Hindu and Isma'ili concepts. The coexistence of vocabulary such as *avatr* and *nur*, *puran* and *kuran*, *sat dharma* and *din* by their very proximity construct a religious language mutually recognised by Hindus and Satpanth Isma'ilis alike.

In all this, what should have become abundantly clear is that the exclusive focus of

Kuran / Quran is the last veda

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Satpanth is connected to Hinduism

the *Garbis* is religious conversion, practice and salvation. The Hindus who accept the Pir's teaching are portrayed as consciously renouncing their former idols, sacred texts, priests and rituals of worship and voluntarily adopting Satpanth as their new religion (*dharma*) with its own locus (*satgur—avatar*), its own set of rituals (the drinking of holy water or *paval*, the paying of tithe or *dasond* and the congregational prayer or *satsang*). Yet, although this True Path is taught in the *Garbis* as a *new* path, it is also presented as a continuation of an ancient one. That is, Satpanth is shown to be rooted in and vindicated by the primordial Hindu tradition of which it is considered to be the ultimate expression.

Finally, what makes this work a rather good specimen of an inward orientation and quiescent stage of Isma'ilism is that not only has it little war imagery, but that salvation is truly understood as the salvation of souls. To illustrate:

> The *imams* are from light; they are ever present in the world. 82:15
>
> Listen to this true wisdom and serve [them]; 82:16
>
> Then you will reach the other shore and attain Heaven (*svarga*). 82:17

This focus on the salvation of souls is under-scored by lists in the *Garbis* of those persons and souls saved by the *avatar—imam*; they include figures in Hindu mythology such as Dhruva, Hariscandra and the five Pandava brothers. There are a number of verses that repeat the following claim and promise:

> Rather, serve Saheb, the Creator, with firm faith—81:06
> He who saved in this age of Kalyug twelve crore devout souls. 81:16
> He who in this last period will save countless brave believers. 81:17

Moreover, the *imams*, who have saved countless souls and rewarded the true and righteous, were none other than the famous *avatars* of Hindu mythology. Among these saviour figures are also *pirs*, namely. Pir Sadr al-Din and Pir Hasan Kabir al-Din.

> Five crore [were saved] by Prahlad who recited the name of Narsimha. 89:07
> Seven crore [were saved] by Hariscandra who was saved by Sri Rama. 89:08
> Twelve crore pious [were saved] by truth in this age of Kalyug. 89:11
> Their rescuer was Pir Sadr Al-Din; he saved them all by himself. 89:12
> Numerous will come together with Pir Sadr al-Din, some twelve crore 91:11
> Countless crore will come with Guru Hasan Shah who upheld the Vedas. 91:12

This kind of enumerative list of souls saved, that is, ferried across to the other shore (*pahele par*), occurs several times in the *Garbis*. An image is created of a heaven filled with divine light (*nur*) where the 124,000 prophets are also gathered [91:13]. The interiorisation of salvation as eternal life in a heavenly abode of bliss is emphasised by the repeated use of the symbol of divine light or *nur* which would fill the pure souls.

> The gathering is filled with the saints (*awliya*) who bear divine light. 94:12
> The gathering radiates with the *Gurunar* who is full of divine light. 94:13
> O Hindus! On and on why wander in circles? Drink in the pure light. 96:10
> O Hindus! He who lives in Kahat city is the Saheb—giver of boons. 96:13
> O Hindus! Attaining heaven (*vaikuntha*) you will reign in eternal bliss. 96:14

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The theme of promises made by the Pir in the Multan *ginans* continues in the *Garbis*, but this promise is no longer in the form of receiving military aid from the West nor being rescued by the Shah. Rather, the promise is reconceived as the act of showing the path to and *revealing* the true reality of the Shah. Thus, the *Garbis* declare,

> We have come up to your door, [now] recognise us! 101:12
> We have kept our promise, [now] wat have you to say? 101:13
> Countless of souls have not been saved, why remain with them? 101:14
> The *pir* made a promise and he came—see how he showed them the path! 106:14
> The *pir* explained this word by word to those who would accept Satpanth. 106:16
> They were saved, man and woman, when Pir Shams spoke his thoughts. 106:17

Accordingly, the ultimate object of religion as depicted in the *Garbis* has become the attainment of the divine vision (*didar*) and reality of the *imam*. Thus, the Pir declares

> Who enters the religion of Satpanth attains freedom and the divine vision. 99:15
> If your earning are honest and pure, you will enter Heaven's (*svarga*) gate. 105:16
> O believers, attain the divine vision (*didar*) and your sins will vanish. 105:18

Salvation in the *Garbis*, therefore, is primarily a spiritual reality and the one who holds the key to this state of eternal bliss is the *avatar—imam*, the path to whom only the *pirs* could reveal.

To conclude, then, if the narratives in the *ginans* can be construed to mirror reality at some level, mistily reflecting clues about social, cultural and historical context, it seems that some interesting patterns emerge upon closer inspection of the *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams. There is sufficient evidence to argue that the *ginans* display an unusual degree of interest in historical memory. This effort at realism goes to the point of citing specific dates, places and historical personalities. For instance, there is an unusual verse in the *ginan* titled *Janaza* (coffin or corpse) which records that the day that the Pir departed Multan was a Thursday, the 17th day of Vaisakhi [25:23].

One explanation of this mysterious record suggest that it marks the day when the Pir died and that, since then, a fast has been observed on Thursdays. Other verses in the same *ginan* describe how his followers wept when his time to depart neared and how they then carried his coffin off to Ucch where he was buried [25:21, 24].

It is also possible to detect contrasts in the *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams. We have noted that the *gianans* associated with Multan are consistently connected with fort and battle imagery and predictions of victory over a menacing demon-king. The imagery of conflict in Cinab (possibly another name for Multan) is portrayed in great detail in the *ginans*. Delhi, too, is cited in one *ginan* and this remnant may have some remote connection with the unsuccessful revolt (referred to in the previous chapter) of the Isma'ilis in 1236 C.E. headed by a Nur Turk during the reign of Illtutmish's daughter, Radiyya. There are scattered references to Ghazni where the Pir first came to preach as a Muslim *faqr* from Daylaman. *Ginans that* refer to Ucch generally concern the conversion activities of the Pir and his disciples. The contest between the Sufi saint of Ucch, Baha al-Din Zakariyya and Pir Shams, who cursed the former with a pair of horns, is related in another *ginan*.

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the Isma'ili alliance with the Sumrahs was secure. The tomb in Ucch, Multan, most likely belongs to this Isma'ili *pir*.

As for the dating of Pir Shams, it has been noted that the dates that are cited in the *ginans* (1118 C.E., 1143 C.E. and 1150 C.E.) differ from the dates given in the genealogy or *shajara* (1165–1276 C.E.) preserved by the keepers of his shrine by almost half a century. These dates may be associated with the activities of earlier *da'is*. However, the fact that they have been mentioned in connection with the two disciples of Pir Shams complicates matters. That these dates may not be completely reliable is suggested by the inconsistency between the fact that, on the one hand, the *ginans* constantly refer to these two disciples as the 'two youths' and, on the other hand, the dates posit a gap of some thirty-two years between the time when Surbhan allegedly received Pir Shams (1118 C.E.) and when Candrabhan converted (1150 C.E.).

The dates given in the *shajara*, though they over-extend the life of Pir Shams (perhaps, to make it coincide with that of the Sufi saint and rival of the Isma'ili *da'wah*, Baha' al-Din Zakariyya, who died in 1277 C.E.), appear to be worth serious consideration for the following reasons. Firstly, since the birth date of Pir Shams given in the *shajara* is 1165 C.E. this would mean that the life and activities of Pir Shams followed the declaration of the *Qiyamah* in 1164 C.E. If Pir Shams did play a seminal role in the articulation of Satpanth Isma'ilism and this appears to have been the case, the declaration of the *Qiyamah*—which effectively disengaged the formalities and ritual accountrement of the faith from its essential principles—would have made this innovative articulation of Satpanth both possible and permissible.

Given the internal evidence of alliances and political conflict attached to his activities in Multan, as well as our knowledge of the history of Sind in the twelfth century, it seems reasonable to suggest that the major activities of Pir Shams took place in the latter half of the twelfth century. The testimony preserved in the *ginans* alluding to political conflict, for imagery and victory over an insurgent Hindu king suggest the possibility that Pir Shams was engaged in the region around the time of the Ghurid invasions which culminated in Isma'ili massacres in 1175 C.E. The allusions in the *ginan* narratives depict a situation both of conflict and difficulty (hence the plea for ('biberation') and a promise of help, victory and security. The time between the Ghurid attacks on Sind and the fall of Alamut would have been filled with a similar tension and ambiguity. On the one hand, the Isma'ilis in Sind, with their Sumrah base, were under attack, but, on the other hand, their centre in Alamut represented a well-known and established power base which held forth the promise of liberation.

It has been shown that the *Garbis*, which are also attributed to this *pir*, seem to capture a qieter phase of the Satpanth Isma'ili *da'wah's* activity. Not only do these poems associate Pir Shams with historical persons who lived between the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries, but, in contrast to the Multan-Cinab narratives, they attach a clearly other-wordly, religious significance to salvation. It is likely that as the area of Multan was increasingly subjugated and as Sufi orders such as the state-affiliated Suhrawardi *tariqah* gained ground in the region, the Isma'ilis migrated south towards Lower Sind and Gujarat. The setting of the narratives in the *Garbis*, a place called Analwad—which may be the town Anhilwad in Gujarat—is in consonance with the fact that the subsequent

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centre of Isma'ili activity moved away from north-western India and towards the regions of Malwa, Kathiawad and Gujarat.

The *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams that refer to his activities around the Multan area also contain allusions that suggest that he preached during the eve of the growing presence of rival Sufi *ta-riqahs* in Multan. While it is unclear whether Pir Shams actually confronted the Sufi saint, Baha' al-Din Zakariyya, the legendary contest between the two records the threat that institutionalised and state-affiliated Sufism my have posted to the Satpanth *da'wah* during this period. That the Isma'ilis did not utterly relinquish their political ambitions in the region is evidenced by their unsuccessful attempt to seize control in Delhi, the political center of North India, in 1236 C.E. under the reign of Queen Radiyya. Whether she was the same Queen Radiyadevi who is mentioned in the *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams is impossible to ascertain; however, this may be a clue that his life extended to this period and that Pir Shams had some connection with this uprising.

It is inevitable that there is much by way of speculation here, given the nature of our sources and the lack of other historical information on this figure or the Isma'ili *da'wah* in Sind at the time. Based on the preceding analysis of the *ginans* attributed to Pir Shams and what we know about the historical context in the Indian sub-continent and Persia between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries and pending the discovery of further materials, we may tentatively conclude the following. The Pir Shams of the *ginans* in the Anthology translated here was a *pir* of the Nizari Isma'ili *da'wah* who played a critical role in advancing the latter's political aspirations in Sind, as well as in setting and articulating the religious foundations of Satpanth Isma'ilism. Most likely, this figure hailed from Sabzawar, came to India as a youth and lived between the mid-twelfth and mid-thirteenth centuries. His principal area of activity radiated from a base in Multan and he lies buried in Ucch in a tomb popularly known as 'Shah Shams.'

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